



News From

Maggie Brooks

Monroe County Executive

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2010 State of the County Address
Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks
Tuesday, May 18, 2010 – 7:00 P.M.

Thank you President Kress and good evening to all of you.

Before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge and thank Aviella Winder, the talented young lady who performed God Bless America for us just a moment ago.

Aviella is a 7th grader at Martha Brown Middle School in Fairport who, having already signed a professional recording contract, is Monroe County's own "Idol." Aviella – Thank you for performing tonight. We wish you the best of luck – you clearly have a very bright future ahead of you.

As we do every year, please also join me in a moment of silence to honor the brave men and women who are fighting for our freedom overseas, and to remember Monroe County's own heroes who were lost during the past year. They are:

Staff Sergeant Nekl B. Allen of Gates,

And Private First Class Daniel J. Rivera of Rochester.

Thank you.

Let me welcome you all to my 7th State of the County Speech. I would like to give a special welcome to Chairman Bill Reilich and Chairman Tom Cook.

My thanks go out to Sheriff Patrick O'Flynn and County Clerk Cheryl Dinolfo for their continued commitment to good government.

I would like to express my respect and gratitude to President Jeff Adair, Majority Leader Dan Quatro, Minority Leader Harry Bronson, and all the members of the Monroe County Legislature for the important role they play in County policymaking.

Our community is fortunate to benefit from the leadership of Rochester Mayor Bob Duffy, as well as my partners at the town, village and school district level. Thank you all for your continued efforts to put taxpayers first.

And last but certainly not least, I would be remiss if I didn't thank and recognize my husband Bob for all of his support.

In 2003, the voters of this community entrusted me with the honor of serving as Monroe's 5th County Executive. At that time I made a promise to our taxpayers. I would embrace a spirit of cooperation and collaboration to overcome challenges and pursue opportunities. I would create a government that leads by example, does more with less, and lives within its means. And I would maintain a quality of life that defines Monroe County as a premier community for living, working, and raising a family.

Tonight, I am proud to say we've kept those promises and the State of our County is stable.

But it's not just about Monroe County. Our State and our Nation continue to face incredible economic challenges. Overburdened taxpayers are responding to crisis with demands for less spending and more accountability. Taxpayers everywhere are angry and frustrated. They are worried about their families and their futures.

And they expect government to lead by example as we try to find the path to economic recovery. The answer is not more government, more taxes, more special interests, or more politics. It's all about jobs!

And creating jobs is all about partnerships. In 1961 a handful of business, community, and government leaders had a vision. Monroe Community College was formed and today is the County's most critical ally in workforce development. MCC is the crown-jewel of our nation's community-college system.

I thank its talented and dedicated President, Anne Kress, as well as the faculty, staff and students for hosting our address tonight.

Monroe County and MCC have a strong history of collaboration. What started as a mission to prepare students for work in local hospitals and health care facilities has expanded to workforce training in law, criminal justice, human services, and education.

In 1997, the Applied Technologies Center was opened to serve some of the fastest growing industries in the nation: optical fabrication, precision manufacturing, and automotive technology.

In 2002, the Public Safety Training Facility began the comprehensive training of our region's first responders. In 2007, the College answered the County's call to provide education, training, and resource development to the agriculture industry.

Monroe Community College is a model of educational excellence, a major employer, and infuses an amazing \$700,000,000 into the local economy each year.

Monroe County is proud to serve as the primary government sponsor for MCC and there is no question we get a great return on our investment.

When it's all about jobs, people looking for work demand results.

With a national unemployment rate pushing 10% and the state jobless rate at nearly 9%, it is unacceptable to me as Monroe County's Executive that we still have local workers worrying about where their next paycheck will come from.

Creation and retention of good paying jobs must continue to be our top priority.

Since 2004, Monroe County has assisted more than 800 projects so new companies can plant roots and existing companies can grow their operations right here in Monroe County. Almost 12,000 new jobs have been created and more than 52,000 jobs retained. Together, that's 64,000 local jobs, or roughly the populations of the Towns of Brighton and Gates – combined.

In the past year alone the economic development programs and incentives offered by Monroe County mean 960 new jobs will be created and 3,500 jobs retained.

It's not about corporate handouts. It's all about jobs and strategic investments. Monroe County's assistance will lead to more than \$2,000,000,000 dollars in new direct private investment. And that doesn't include the indirect dollars that will flow to other local businesses, merchants, restaurants, hotels, the real estate market, churches, schools, and charities.

A large part of Monroe County's success is due to the dedication and hard work of Economic Development Director Judy Seil and her entire team. Helping companies stay competitive and stay in this region means leveling the playing field. No one does a better job at leveling the playing field than Monroe County.

Government can provide assistance and support, but it is the private sector that creates jobs.

Each year, I'm proud to highlight a few of many business success stories in our community. Let me start with a project in one of Monroe County's most scenic west side communities.

For over four years, families in the Village of Spencerport have lived without the simple convenience of a local grocery store. Residents are forced to drive to surrounding communities, sometimes late at night or in treacherous Western New York winters, just to pick up a dozen eggs, or a gallon of milk. Well, that's about to change.

With the help of COMIDA, our economic development engine, Tops Friendly Markets is in the process of renovating 37,000 square feet of vacant retail space in Spencerport's Village Plaza and will open a new full-service grocery store. The new store means a better quality of life for Spencerport residents and for the 66 people hired to work full-time there.

Todd Nettnin, District Manager for Tops is with us this evening, along with Spencerport Mayor Joyce Lobene. Congratulations on this great new addition to our community.

It's all about jobs, and the food-service industry is definitely a major job growth opportunity for Monroe County.

LiDestri Foods is nationally known for its manufacturing and private labeling of pasta sauces, dips, and salsas. But, founded as Cantisano Foods in 1975, LiDestri Foods is locally owned.

The company has purchased and plans to renovate a 650,000 square foot facility in Rochester's Eastman Business Park. After working with COMIDA, LiDestri Foods decided to expand locally and keep 425 existing jobs in Monroe County. In fact, the company will be creating 60 new jobs.

When considering expansion, companies have the choice of going anywhere in the world. I'd like to acknowledge John LiDestri, President of LiDestri Foods, who is here tonight. John – thank you for choosing Monroe County and for your commitment to our local workforce.

It's all about jobs, but not always new jobs.

Retaining existing companies and keeping the jobs we already have is critical to the future of our local economy. And despite the global economy, Monroe County can successfully compete for winning businesses.

Harris RF Communications is an international communications and information technology company that supplies secure voice and data communications products for military, government and commercial applications worldwide. Harris has been part of the Rochester economy for nearly 50 years and employs more than 2,300 local residents.

Recently the company was asked to look at moving local manufacturing operations to Melbourne, Florida or Lynchburg, Virginia.

Well the County couldn't let that happen. We worked with the leadership at Harris and now the company has purchased a former Xerox facility in Henrietta for \$19,000,000. Harris will also invest an additional \$30,000,000 in future renovations and equipment for the site.

That decision is a huge win for the County and it's a development that will protect more than a thousand local manufacturing jobs.

Mike Maurer, Vice President and Controller at Harris, is here representing the company this evening. Mike – I want to publicly thank Harris for continuing to make Rochester its home. Join me in a round of applause for Harris, a company that puts us on the map.

Creating and retaining jobs is a team effort in Monroe County.

Monroe Manufactures Jobs is a collaboration between the County and MCC designed to help better meet the increasing demands of our local manufacturing industry.

The program connects students of MCC's Precision Machining, Optical Fabrication, and AAS Precision Machining programs with a job at local manufacturing companies. If the relationship lasts for a year, awards are given to the worker and the company.

Tonight we recognize the program's first graduate, Matthew Brooks from Monroe Community College and his employer, ROMOLD Incorporated. Congratulations and we hope you are the first of many to benefit from this opportunity.

Manufacturing historically has been the foundation of our community's economic success and continues to position the region for even greater prosperity in the future.

For each new manufacturing job added in our community, 2.7 separate service jobs are created. It's all about jobs, and any sector that creates jobs – on top of jobs – will be a target for Monroe County's economic development efforts.

Monroe Manufactures Jobs LoanPlus is a new program, an innovative partnership between the Monroe County Industrial Development Corporation and participating local banks. It's designed to help manufacturing companies planning to purchase equipment.

Companies need cutting-edge technology to compete, but the cost of the upgrades can be prohibitive, especially for small to mid-sized businesses. Capital dollars for large purchases aren't always available, especially during tough times.

Our program offers low interest loans, at a rate of only 1%. And the company can receive an additional \$500 bonus if an individual on unemployment is hired for at least six months.

When it's all about jobs, we must focus on protecting taxpayers.

Sometimes government is criticized for the incentives we provide. But Monroe County's job-creation services are not funded by taxpayer dollars. Our economic development programs are paid for by fees that are collected from companies who use the incentives.

One of our strongest opportunities for job growth is in the field of healthcare. Our community is a national leader in this sector.

Tonight, I would like to thank the County legislature for its recent passage of an unprecedented bill that allows local not-for-profit organizations to access and secure reduced-cost borrowing. The State used to provide this funding opportunity, but left the fate of several projects in jeopardy when it failed to renew similar bonding legislation.

Our legislature's swift action is already supporting job creation in Monroe County.

Tom Crilly, Chief Financial Officer at Unity Hospital is here tonight. Unity has been approved to receive bonding for a new \$240,000,000 expansion project.

The bonding will finance the complete reconstruction of the 68,000 square foot former Park Ridge Living Center skilled nursing facility, including the renovation of existing patient rooms and a new expanded space for cardiology and nursing stations.

While in construction, 250 people will be put to work. When completed, Unity's expansion will create 150 permanent, good-paying jobs.

Tom, we are honored that you could join us tonight. Supporting the infrastructure that keeps our community at the forefront of patient care and medical research is definitely all about jobs.

There's no question that when our Nation and our State struggle with finances, the county level of government feels the pain.

And when the going gets tough in the job market, it's our residents that suffer and it's our residents that need a helping hand.

Last year we launched a timely program on our award-winning website, monroecounty.gov. Monroe JobLink connects employers with job applicants from all over the County. This year, we're expanding this initiative to help local men and women who are coming home from service in the armed forces.

Working with the U.S. Army Reserve Employer Partnership program, Monroe County will provide a portal to the Army's website and connect troops stationed in any part of the world with job postings from participating local employers.

Local servicemen and women, and all of our decorated veterans, need our support and Monroe County is proud to work with our community partners to ensure that government's priorities meet the growing needs of those who have served this community and this Country.

That's why in June, I will introduce legislation and ask our County legislators to approve the creation of a new Veterans Advisory Council. Ken Moore is here tonight from Chapter 20 of the Vietnam Veterans of America.

Ken, thank you for being a champion of this project and thank you for being a friend to veterans of all wars.

When the going gets tough in the economy, the demand for public assistance grows dramatically.

Career Start helps those on public assistance find full-time jobs. On May 3rd, I had the honor of cutting the ribbon on a brand new home for Career Start on St. Paul Street, right next door to the County's Department of Human Services.

The site has computer labs designed for job searching and a clothing center to help people develop an interview and work-appropriate wardrobe. Lindsay Taliento, Career Start President, is the spirit behind this service that is producing incredible results. Each month Career Start places 55 local workers into jobs.

Lindsay, thank you for helping people realize the sense of pride and accomplishment that comes with a steady paycheck and self-sufficiency.

To reinforce our highly-skilled workforce, it's critical that job training programs adjust to support the needs of expanding industry sectors.

As part of our Welfare to Work program, our Department of Human Services will this year allocate funding for training in three essential areas: transitional jobs, jobs in health care, and green jobs. Wage reimbursements will be offered to nearly 190 employees hired by companies that specialize in these three areas.

DHS Commissioner Kelly Reed and her team know what it takes to help our workforce be the best prepared and most productive in the country. Thank you, Kelly.

It is all about jobs, and to create jobs we need to maintain our high quality of life.

A vibrant community rich in entertainment, education, recreation, natural resources, and history is a magnet for people and business.

And Monroe County truly does offer a quality of life that is second to none. As it says on the Greater Rochester Enterprise website, and I quote, "we have the arts, sports, and culture of a big city and the comfort of a small town."

For government, protecting our quality of life through outstanding public safety services is an essential responsibility.

Monroe County is widely recognized as a state and national leader in the delivery of public safety services. Our dedicated personnel in the County's law enforcement, fire, and EMS agencies work tirelessly each and every day to protect us and keep our streets and neighborhoods safe and secure.

This community has a longstanding commitment to providing the best training, the best equipment, and state-of-the-art infrastructure to promote excellence in public safety. Our Public Safety Training Facility is a national model that represents a partnership between the Federal, State, County, and City levels of government and Monroe Community College.

It's a collaboration that was formed before government was even talking about consolidation. It works for our first responders and it works for taxpayers.

County Public Safety Director Steve Bowman, County Fire Bureau Chief Sam DeRosa, County Emergency Management Administrator Muffy Meisenzahl, and facility Director Dean Michael Karnes deserve our thanks and praise for their efforts to keep Monroe County at the top of the pack for public safety service delivery.

But a reliable, efficient, secure, and fully integrated communications system is the single most powerful tool we can provide to those entrusted with keeping the citizens of Monroe County safe. September 11th, 2001 taught us that disjointed communication can be a life or death proposition.

For years, the County has struggled to keep up with changing technology. Today in 2010 we still have a system that, with aging and often outdated equipment, cannot grow to meet changing needs and has no dedicated funding mechanism. Public safety is compromised. Officer safety is compromised.

The sheer will and dedication of our public safety personnel is what makes the current system work.

Well, we've found an innovative answer to this challenge. Thanks to the support of our Legislature's majority caucus, Monroe County has developed an innovative public-private model – a local development corporation – that will allow us to pay for state of the art upgrades to our communications system.

Once again Monroe County is leading the way. The LDC model gives us the efficiency of the private sector with the accountability demanded of the public sector. Better yet, it saves the County half a million dollars a year with \$10,000,000 in savings anticipated over time.

It's all about improved quality, lower costs, and a safer community. And it's all about new jobs for our LDC's local partner companies.

I'm proud to announce tonight that Harris RF Communications has won a competitive search process to be the main supplier of radio equipment for this new project. But that's only the beginning of the list of local companies that will partner with us to serve our first responders and create jobs at the same time.

Lenel Systems International is an award winning worldwide provider of security management software solutions. LeChase Construction has played a huge role in the development of many significant local projects since 1944. ECC Technologies is a company that has successfully supported Monroe County's IT initiatives and our fiber network. Technical Systems Group supplies integrated security solutions and systems to our region. And Navitech Services Corporation is a strategic expert in IT, security, and public safety infrastructure.

All of these companies will create jobs due to the new LDC partnership. Individuals from each of these companies are here tonight representing this incredible team. Let's give them a hand.

Providing state-of-the-art technology doesn't stop with public safety communications. If you get a chance, travel to the corner of Broad Street and Plymouth Ave and welcome CSI to Rochester.

Also join me tonight in welcoming Janet Anderson-Seaquist, a nationally-renowned forensic scientist from Ventura, California, who recently moved across the country to Rochester to become the Director of our long-awaited new Public Safety Crime Laboratory.

Under Janet's leadership, we are on the brink of taking our crime fighting efforts to a whole new level. Janet – thank you for bringing your experience and expertise to Monroe County.

Serving 8 counties, Monroe County has the only regional crime lab in Upstate New York. We broke ground on its new home in October and, when completed, we will have a powerful resource to help us solve crime, prosecute criminals, and keep them in jail and off our neighborhood streets.

It's all about 391 construction jobs and 11 additional full-time forensic workers. It's also about a project that is on-time and under budget.

When it comes to jobs and the local economy, the state of our County is stable. When it comes to the spirit of our people, the state of the County couldn't be stronger.

Government used to say we are doing more with less. Well now we say we are doing less with less. With shrinking resources and growing expenses, government needs private partners willing and able to make a difference.

George Mercier is a great example. The Mercier Literacy Program was founded in 2002. It is the only community-based nonprofit focused exclusively on child literacy. Each year Monroe County provides \$50,000 dollars in grant money to help support the program's summer literacy initiative. Our county dollars go much farther when combined with private money and dollars from other sources.

Most importantly, the Mercier Literacy Program is saving our kids through reading. George is passionate about this program and passionate about the welfare of our children. George – thank you for being here tonight.

Let me tell you about another special person. Amy Vorhauer is in the 7th grade at Cosgrove Middle School in Spencerport. She's a natural performer who enjoys playing the trumpet, singing in show choir, and she loves musicals. Amy is also an avid reader.

Last year, her love of books and learning paid off when she won the Knowledge Bowl, a competition that was part of Monroe County's Summer Reading program. In fact, Amy impressed us all by answering every single question correctly.

Amy – you are a testament to the importance of reading in a young person's education. Thank you for coming tonight. You are a role model for your peers and I hope you share your love of reading with others. Best of luck in all of your future studies.

Our summer reading program encourages and promotes literacy in schools and libraries across the County. It's run by the Rochester-Monroe County Youth Bureau, which is the primary advocacy organization for young people in our area. This year our Youth Bureau will celebrate 50 years of excellence. To Director Bob Zinck and his team, thank you.

The Sands family embodies the spirit of philanthropy that, over time, has made this community what it is today. Whether in arts and culture, health care, or education, the generosity of Richard and Rob Sands has had a huge impact throughout our region. They are not just successful businessmen at Constellation Brands. They are good citizens who believe in giving back.

Tonight I'd like to tell you another story about their kindness. Take a ride out to the Monroe Community Hospital campus and you'll see a building taking shape.

It won't be just any building. Within those walls we will forever change the way services are provided to foster care children and families in our County. This innovative, all-inclusive, under-one-roof service delivery model will be the first of its kind in the country.

It's a partnership between our Department of Human Services, our Health Department, the University of Rochester, and the Society for Protection and Care of Children. It will showcase our nationally recognized medical home for foster children, known as Starlight pediatrics, by co-locating it with a supervised visitation center.

A state grant opportunity allowed us to break ground last fall, but we also needed to launch a capital campaign to raise additional dollars for construction.

As a true champion for children in our region, Richard Sands was the first to step up and has generously donated \$1,000,000 towards our goal in the name of his entire family and Constellation Brands.

Richard, Chairman of Constellation Brands, is here this evening representing his brother Rob, CEO of Constellation Brands, and his brother-in-law Dr. Andrew Stern, who were unable to be with us tonight. Richard, please stand and be recognized for your incredible generosity and commitment to improving outcomes for kids and families in Monroe County.

That is the kind of story that makes our community so special. It's the story of remarkable people doing remarkable things. And often times those remarkable people are public servants working for you, the taxpayers.

Let me share another story about one of those remarkable public servants.

At the end of a long and tiresome week, Monroe County Probation officer Rosario Zocco signed out from his office downtown at about 5 p.m. on April 30th, a Friday night.

He headed north on Portland Avenue towards home and planned to stop and pick up a pizza on the way. Rosario was looking forward to a weekend of coaching his children's sports teams and spending time with his family.

He had only been in the car for a few minutes when he approached the corner of Portland Avenue and Durnan Street. Officer Zocco spotted a uniformed Rochester Police Officer, with a firearm drawn, engaging a man who was holding a large knife in his hand. To make matters worse, the officer had no backup and a large and hostile crowd quickly began to form behind him.

Officer Zocco knew he had to help. Using his training and 13 years of experience with the Probation Department, he displayed his badge around his neck, stepped out of his vehicle, drew

his county-issued firearm, identified himself to the officer in trouble, and then turned his attention to the man with the knife and the growing threat from the crowd.

With both officers outnumbered, Officer Zocco knew he had to stay alert to avoid a tragedy. Suddenly the man with the knife lunged at the police officer. The officer fired once and struck the man, as intended. Officer Zocco dove towards the injured man, removed the knife from his hand, and handcuffed him while checking for other weapons.

Officer Zocco stayed with the assailant until backup arrived. The RPD officer was able to secure the crowd. Officer Zocco's brave action, far above and beyond the call of duty, diffused a dangerous situation and rescued an officer from harm's way.

Officer Zocco embodies the dedication and courage of our probation team. He is here tonight with his family. Thank you, sir, for being a community hero!

You can find plenty of those remarkable public servants at the Greater Rochester International Airport.

We like to say that the Airport is Monroe County's "Gateway to the world." More than 2.5 million travelers from all over the world made use of our airport in 2009. And it generates about \$200,000,000 in income, all while contributing more than \$480,000,000 to the local economy each year.

Every year, Monroe County works with the Airport Authority on important facility upgrades to ensure a better experience for travelers. More parking, centralized security screening, wireless internet service, a brand new business center, and more efficient baggage handling – all are investments designed to keep us competitive and user friendly.

But the investment that shows us the greatest return is the one we make in our people.

This year, travelers, airlines, and pilots voted our airport as the recipient of the Balchen-Post Award – a nation-wide recognition for outstanding performance in snow and ice control.

What a great honor! There's no one working harder during a Rochester snowstorm than our crews on the runways.

Tonight, I'd like to thank Director David Damelio, and everyone on his hardworking team, for the outstanding work they do on behalf of our community.

One of Monroe County's greatest resources is our water supply. We are the envy of those who live in other parts of the country, and we have a group of remarkable public servants to thank for that, too.

Our Water Authority has been recognized nationally on numerous occasions for excellence in water quality and safety. Even though it's called the Monroe County Water Authority, our

system serves multiple counties – a regional model now being duplicated in many parts of the country.

I'd like to congratulate Executive Director Ed Marianetti for being selected Public Works Leader of the Year by the American Public Works Association. Because of Ed's leadership, Monroe County will soon have an Eastside Water Treatment plant. Ed and his team worked hard to secure over \$23,000,000 in stimulus funding, the single largest award in the State.

Our Water Authority is under constant scrutiny and, at times, political attack. Our taxpayers should be proud that the caretakers of our public water supply are dedicated men and women working each and every day with pride, distinction, and professionalism so we have a water supply that is accessible, affordable, and safe.

The state of our County is strong because of great people. The state of our County is stable because of jobs and great companies. But today, the state of our County is in jeopardy because of Albany.

For far too long, New York State has lived well beyond its means. The State spends too much, borrows too much, taxes too much, and enables people instead of empowering them.

Our State government is, quite honestly, a dysfunctional circus that is unable to sustain a long list of programs that don't even come close to helping taxpayers and their families. The fate of all counties is tied to Albany. We are the social service arm of State government. When you consider the State controls much of what we do, it's no wonder we are all in a time of crisis.

But Monroe County's hardworking families don't quit when the going gets tough. Your county government won't either.

We will continue to focus our efforts on the only special interest group that really matters – local taxpayers.

Because when it's all about jobs, it's all about taxes.

I know many tune into the State of the County expecting to hear all about what your government has done and what we plan to do in 2010. But tonight, I'm most proud to talk about what Monroe County *didn't* do in 2010.

For the sixth consecutive year, Monroe County protected your family's budget by *not* increasing the county property tax rate.

Monroe County also made history, by *not* increasing the spending we control by even a single penny for 2010.

Monroe County delivered stable taxes *and* froze spending.

We *didn't* reduce critical services that taxpayers expect and deserve. Whether its parks, public health, or public safety, we will not compromise the quality of life unique to this community.

Our outstanding record of stable property taxes all starts with fiscal responsibility.

And that means fiscal restraint and discipline. It means making tough decisions. Our taxpayers and their families get it because they do it every day in their homes and their businesses. You shouldn't expect any less from your government.

Monroe County has reduced the size and cost of local government. Every year we trim the size of our workforce. We've creatively reduced the cost of health care. We've consolidated internal operations to promote efficiency.

And we've captured the attention of others, too. A few weeks ago, two bond rating agencies – Moody's Investors Service and Fitch Ratings – significantly upgraded Monroe County's credit standing. That's just one more affirmation that County government is on the right track.

But we do have one big problem. We have no control over the majority of Monroe County's budget – the same budget you fund with your local taxes.

A staggering 81% of our spending supports mandated expenses raining down from Albany. The mandates imposed by Albany and Washington continue to be our single biggest barrier to property tax reduction.

It sounds laughable that Monroe County controls only 19% of a one billion dollar budget, but there's nothing funny about 81% of our community's spending being controlled by a State government that can't pass a budget on time, or balance its own checkbook.

Before your eyes glaze over at the mention of mandates, let me give you a couple of outrageous examples.

Last year a woman living in one of our neighboring counties was receiving Medicaid benefits. She met the income eligibility threshold and she provided all necessary documentation at the time of application. She did everything by the book. But then something changed. Something big. She won the New York State lottery to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars. It was a lot of money.

She was suddenly wealthy, but guess what? The county was not allowed to terminate her Medicaid assistance because her household income was still below the threshold. Even though she was nearly a millionaire and could afford health care that most of us only wish we could afford, she kept her benefits.

Whether it's the Medicaid Program or food stamps, the State imposes no limit on personal assets. An individual with a low income, who also drives a Lexus, has a yacht, and a summer home in the Hamptons can still receive food stamps. A person who strikes it rich in Vegas or gets a major cash settlement from a lawsuit can still receive Medicaid.

Monroe and other counties joined together to encourage Albany to reinstate the Asset and Resource test that was abolished by the Governor in 2009. It didn't happen.

But Monroe County has found innovative ways to fight back and protect our taxpayers from the ever increasing costs of Medicaid.

In 2008, Monroe County opted into a sales tax swap to take the burden of the Medicaid program off the backs of our property taxpayers. It was growing at an unsustainable rate and the State's Medicaid cap didn't do nearly enough to protect New York counties, who pay 25% of the costs.

Our decision was definitely the path less traveled at the time. In fact we blazed the trail, as the only county to sign up for the swap option. Since then our Medicaid bill has been paid for exclusively with sales tax monies and it's a decision that, despite causing much controversy, is yielding real results.

This year taxpayers will save \$19,000,000 compared to what the bill would have been under the State Medicaid Cap. Looking back over the term of the swap so far – 2008 through 2010 – we project a total savings for local taxpayers of over \$30,000,000.

That's \$30,000,000 worth of County programs and services that won't be on the chopping block through 2010. That's thirty million taxpayer dollars that will stay right where they belong – in your pockets and in our community.

And there are other ways we can chip away at the burden of Medicaid.

Monroe County has made a commitment to crack down on fraud, waste, and abuse in the system. We're part of the Medicaid Demonstration Program, a collaborative effort to identify and investigate questionable Medicaid activity in our community.

Last summer, the Office of the New York State Medicaid Inspector General found that Monroe County led the State in the collection of wrongly claimed Medicaid funds over a five year period, from 2004 to 2009. Our team, including County DHS specialists and several local auditing firms, has successfully recovered almost \$4,000,000.

Monroe County's recovery of \$4,000,000 far outpaces all other counties, even New York City. That's a big win for taxpayers!

It's all about jobs, partnerships, and results. But in these uncertain times, we have to work harder and harder to maintain our quality of life.

We have to work harder than ever, *together*, because it's all about our community and it's all about our future.

Our community was built on the perseverance of leaders like Frederick Douglas and Susan B. Anthony and the determination of people like James Monroe and George Eastman. Their ability to prevail in times of great challenge is the cornerstone of this community's tireless spirit.

There's an expression around the State that goes, "all eyes on Monroe." People know we are the community to beat when it comes to innovation, efficiency, creative solutions, and results.

We may only control a small portion of our budget but we control 100% of our destiny. By standing shoulder-to-shoulder as one community, we can create our own version of the story that Albany is trying to write for us.

I am inspired by the words of a former Governor of New York. They are, "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are." The man was Teddy Roosevelt, and he was right.

We have limitless potential and endless possibilities. Monroe County will do everything it can, with our many assets and opportunities, right here and right now – because it's all about our future.

God Bless You and God Bless Monroe County.

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